Single-Family Construction

New construction in any neighborhood should be sensitive to the character of surrounding houses. After perusing the architectural style descriptions, a builder or property owner should be able to identify the patterns and types of houses within the immediate surroundings of the construction project. New construction does not need to mimic neighboring patterns, but should respect their general rules of design in terms of ***massing***, setbacks, and construction materials.

The following guide will assist builders and property owners in making basic decisions about new construction. Remember, this is meant to be a guide and in no way overrides the City's Zoning Ordinance, Building Code, and other applicable regulations.

1) Identify Neighborhood Features and Discuss Plans with the City

Before moving forward with a construction project, take a look around the neighborhood and identify its primary characteristics, such as predominant architectural patterns, building setbacks, and parking accommodations. If the surrounding neighborhood has two-story homes with shallow setbacks and on-street parking and you want a one-story house with an attached garage, this may not be the neighborhood for your project. The following questions should be considered which Planning staff can help answer:

- Does zoning permit the intended use? To determine if the subject property is in an overlay zone, please refer to Design Review in Roanoke found in the Appendix.
- Does the lot size accommodate the requirements of the development?
- Are the styles and sizes of surrounding houses in the neighborhood similar to the house you intend to construct?

2) Design the House

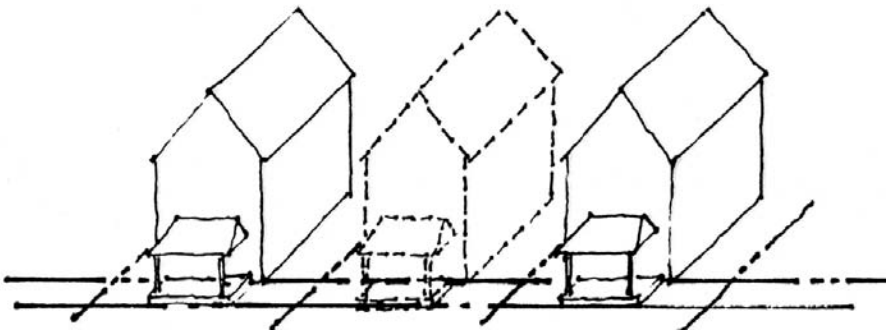
Once you have identified a lot that is suitable for your construction project, and have a general understanding of the types of houses in the neighborhood, you are ready to choose a design for your house that meets your building requirements, and complements the neighborhood. The goal is to be compatible with other styles in the neighborhood, no necessarily replicating older styles. Reference the design elements of surrounding houses but avoid replicating stylistic motifs that may be unique to a particular property. The following items should be considered during the design process:

- Setbacks and Drainage
- ***Massing*** and Roof Forms
- Front Porch
- Windows and Doors
- Exterior Building Materials and Colors
- Landscaping and Security
- Garages and Accessory Structures

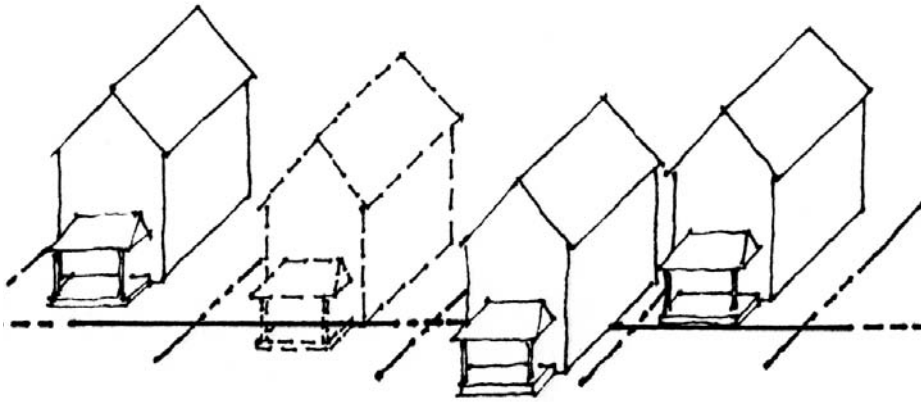
Setbacks and Drainage

Setbacks are established to provide continuity within neighborhoods, provide for a safe and healthy environment, and provide areas for recreation and outdoor activities. In many of Roanoke's neighborhoods, homes are set relatively close together which promotes important social interactions that create friendly, attractive, and active communities. The City's Zoning Ordinance regulates these spaces through front, side, and rear yard setbacks. It is important that you contact the Planning Division to determine minimum and maximum yard requriements before settling on a location to site your building. Another important consideration in house placement is drainage. Most water damage to the foundation is due to poor handling of stormwater.

Front Yard:



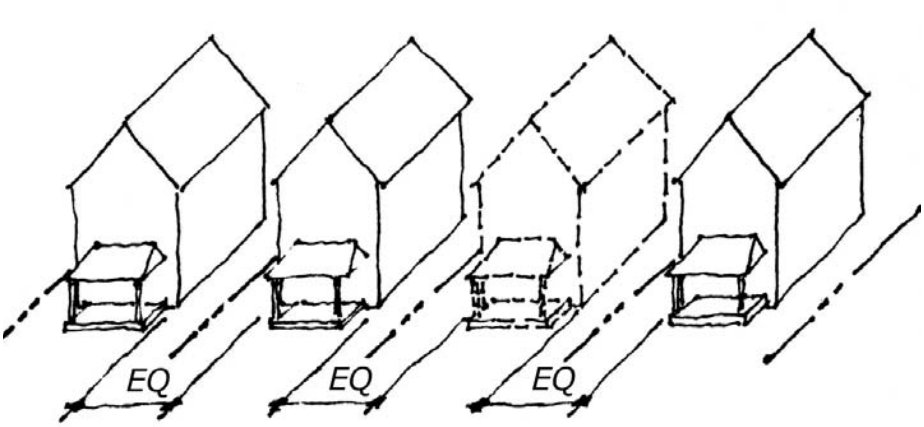
- The infill house should align with the setback established by adjacent homes. This will include alignment of the front ***facade*** and the porch face.



- If the adjacent houses do not follow a consistent setback, establish an average.

- If adjacent lots are vacant, use the setback established by the Zoning Ordinance.
- A consistent grade should be maintained on level lots or consistent grading pattern on sloped lots. A drainage channel should never be located in a front yard. For further guidance please see 'Residential Lot Drainage' in the City's Stormwater Management Design Manual. This document can be found online at www.roanokeva.gov/planning.

Side Yard:



- Maintain average side yard setbacks based on setbacks established by adjacent houses. Exceptions for this rule can be applied to lots with severe slopes, lots with subsurface soil conditions that prove cost prohibitive to overcome, or to lots with natural amenities determined worthy of maintaining such as significant trees, structures, walls, etc.
- Easy access to the rear yard should be provided through at least one side yard for pedestrians and automobiles where appropriate.
- An open drainage channel should never be located in a side yard where visible from the street though a gentle swale integrated with landscpaing is appropriate.

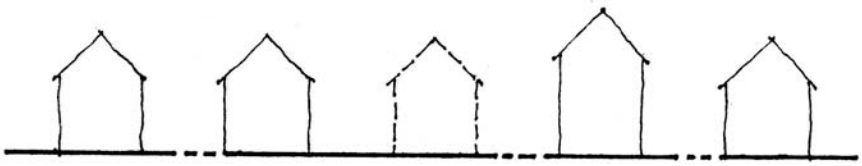
Rear Yard:

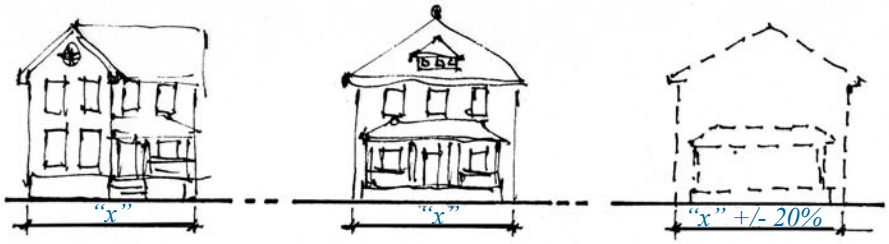
Shallow Vegetated Swale

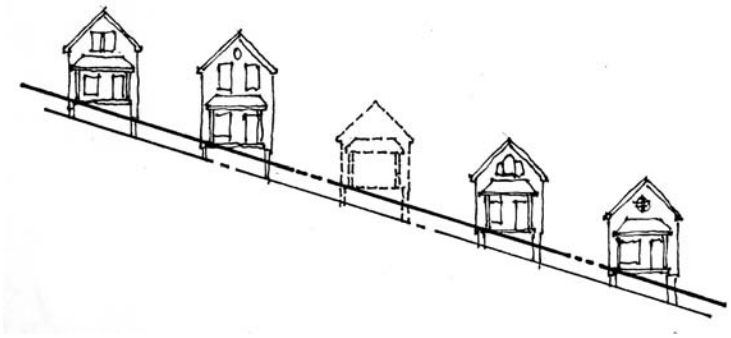
- The rear yard setback will be dictated by the front yard setback plus the depth of the house. Space should be provided for play, recreation and relaxation.
- Stormwater management practices should be accommodated in the rear yard. Runoff from the rear of the property may be directed to a shallow vegetated swale. For further guidance please see 'Residential Lot Drainage' in the City's Stormwater Management Design Manual. This document can be found online at www.roanokeva.gov/planning.

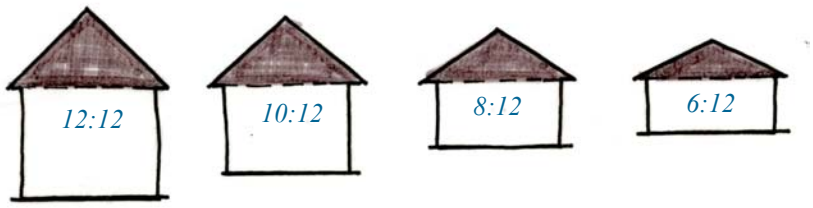
Massing and Roof Forms

Massing is important to compatibility within an existing neighborhood. Similar to subdivisions created today, city blocks were platted and then developed simultaneously and with consistency. Infill development should respect the pre-established development patterns of the block.









Building Height:

- Building height should reflect that of adjacent houses. Generally, new construction should not differ in height by more than 20 percent from the typical buildings on the street.

Building Width:

- The front width of the infill house should be the same as the adjacent homes. The infill house should not vary from the average width of adjacent homes by more than 20 percent.

Foundation Height:

- The foundation height of the infill house should be within 20 percent of adjacent houses.

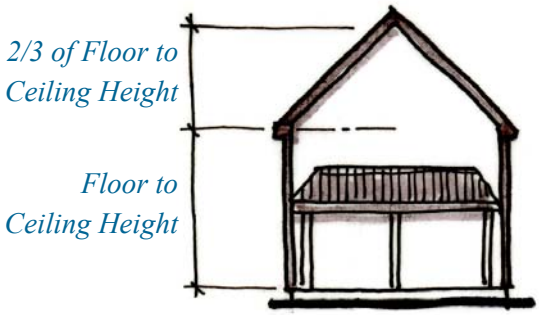
- Where the block is on a hill, the foundation height should match a projected level parallel with the hill.

Roof pitch and configuration:

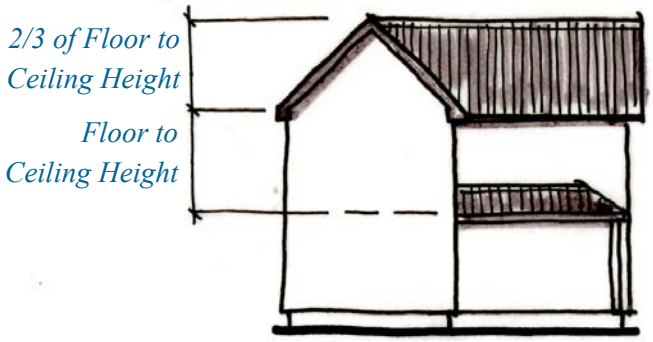
- Roof ***pitch*** should range between 6:12 and 12:12 to facilitate drainage. Intersecting roofs should have the same pitch as the main roof.

- Use surrounding roof types as a guide to new construction. The roof should incorporate a complex roof form such as a ***hipped*** or intersecting ***gable***.

- The roof should be in proportion to the house. It's vertical height from underside of the ***eave*** to the ridge should not exceed the floor to floor height of the house and should not be less than 2/3 of the floor to floor height.

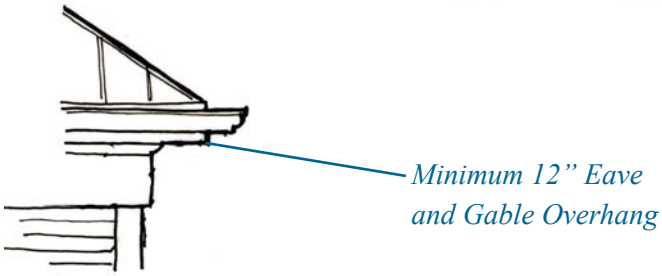


1 to 1 1/2 Story



2 Story

- Where a sloped roof is facing the street, consider adding a dormer. The character and detailing of the dormer should be in keeping with the architectural style of the house and that of adjacent homes.



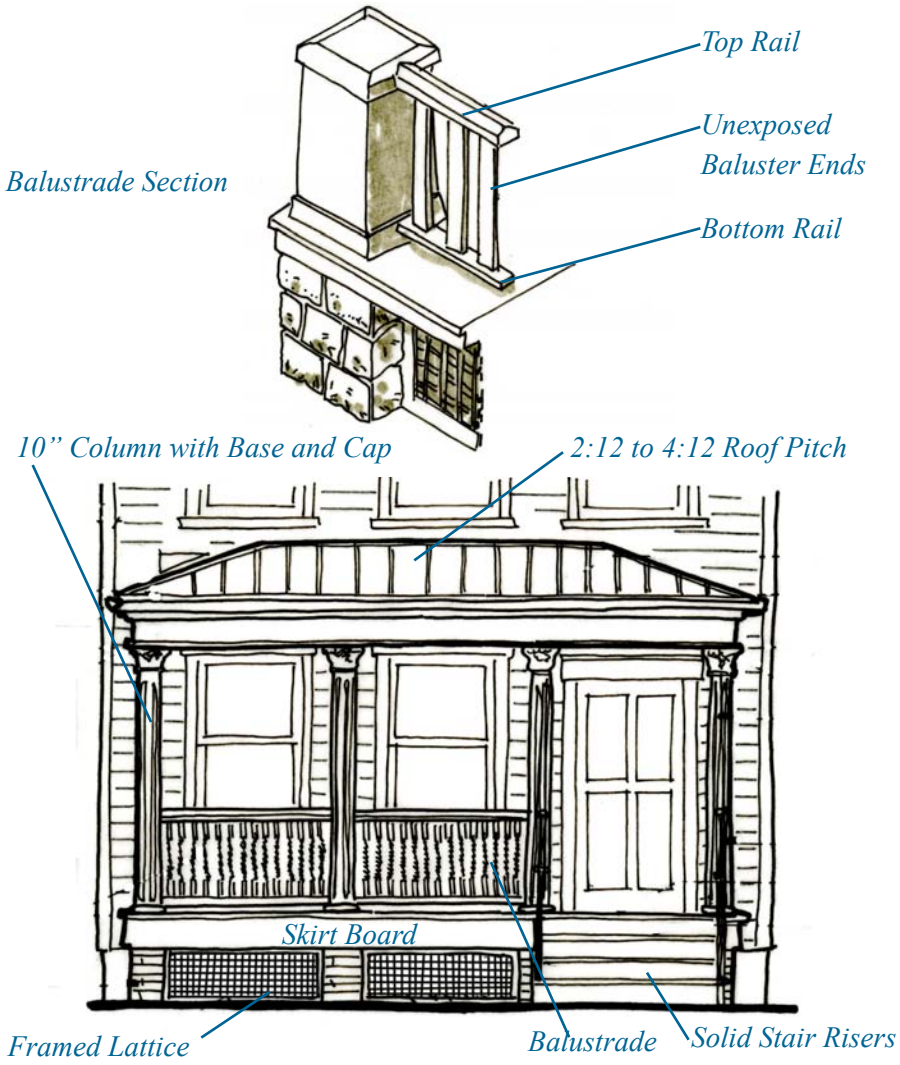
- Eave and gable overhangs should be a minimum of 12 inches.

Porches

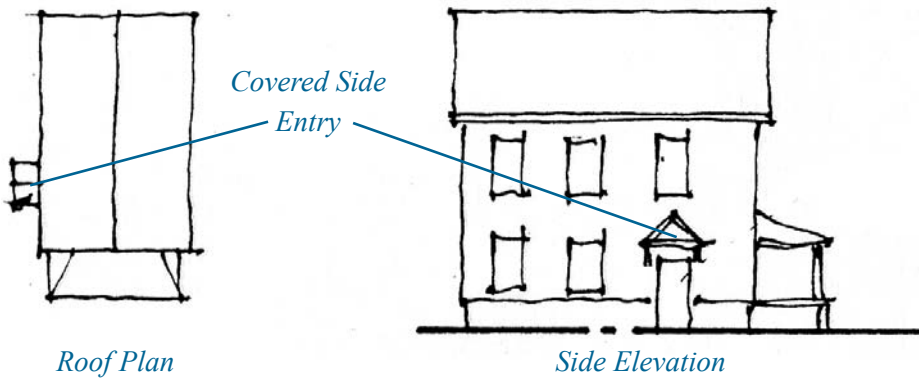
The front porch is the symbol of the house's front entrance and has always represented an area for people to gather and socialize. In recent decades there has been a shift to more private areas inside the house or in the rear yard. However, no matter the shift in social orientation, the front porch remains an architectural and social element in Roanoke's neighborhoods and is an extremely important component to many of Roanoke's homes.

Front Porch:

- Front porches should be at least half the width of the dwelling's façade and have a depth of at least 6 feet though 8 to 10 feet is recommended to create a usable space . Style and detailing should be similar to that found in the neighborhood and should be in keeping with the style of the house.



- Front porch railings should have a top and bottom rail and the ***baluster*** ends should not be exposed but be inset into the bottom rail. To avoid gaps and separation between components, do not use pressure treated lumber that will shrink as it dries.
- Front porch ***columns*** should be uniform in shape and style with a base and cap. Most front porch columns are about 10 inches in diameter.
- The underside of the porch should be framed with lattice between pier supports and under the skirt board.
- All stairs on the front porch should have enclosed (solid) risers.
- The ***pitch*** of the porch roof should be equal or less than that of the main roof.



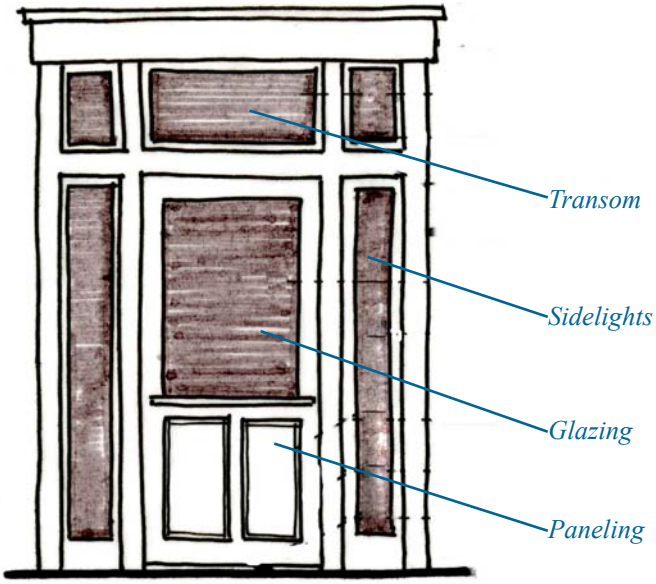
Side Porch:

- Side entries should be covered by a roof with a minimum width and depth of 36 inches.
- A side porch should set back from the front elevation towards the middle or rear of the house.

Windows and Doors

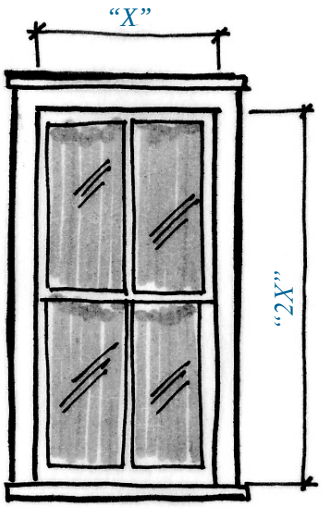
Windows and Doors are among the most highly visible features of any residence. In addition to being functional, they are significant character-defining elements that relate directly to stylistic influences. Before getting started, consider the size, proportion, spacing and rhythm of existing window

and door openings of neighboring buildings. New construction should reflect characteristic window and door patterns.



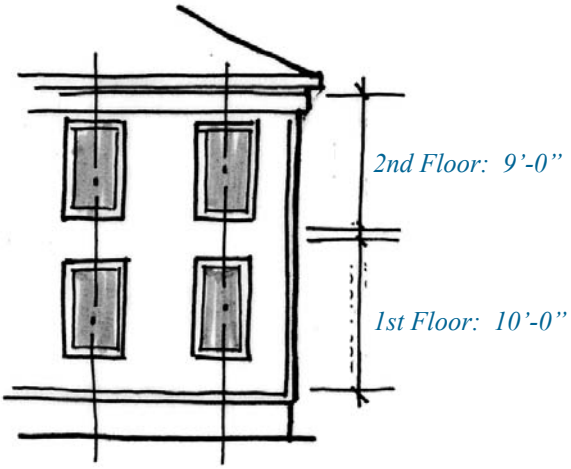
Doors:

- The house's primary entrance should be located on the front elevation. It should be apparent that the front door is the main entrance. The front of a new building should always be oriented to the most prominent street that borders the property.
- Doors should incorporate paneling at a very minimum. The inclusion of ***glazing***, ***sidelights***, and/or a ***transom*** is strongly encouraged.

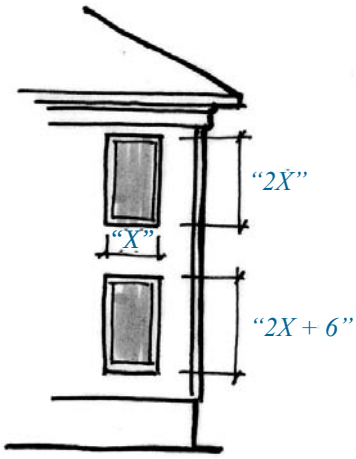


Windows:

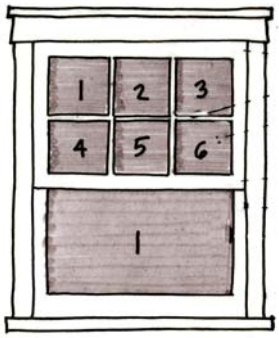
- Windows should be proportioned to be approximately twice as tall as they are wide. All windows on the same floor should be the same height and horizontally aligned, with the exception of ***feature*** windows. Widths for windows on the same floor may vary by as much as 6 inches.



- Second floor windows should be aligned vertically with first floor windows.

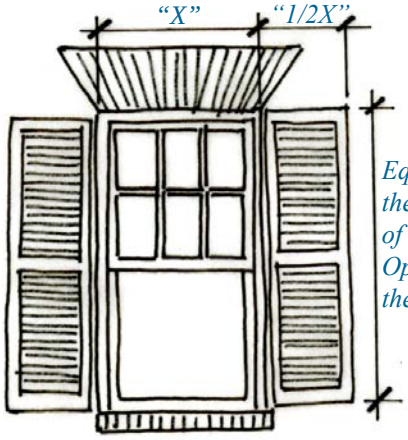


- The first floor windows should be approximately 6-inches taller than second floor windows. The width of first floor windows should be the same as the second floor window with which it aligns vertically.



6 over 1 Double Hung Sash Window

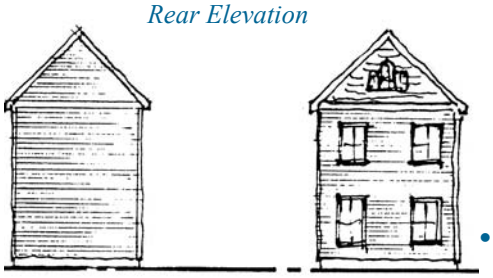
- The number of lights (panes) in an individual window should be similar to that found in the neighborhood and should be in keeping with the style of the house.



Equal to the Height of Window Opening or of the Sash Frame

- Window shutters should be designed to fit the window opening and at least appear operable by attaching them with a hinge to the window casing. Shutters should only be included when they are in keeping with the style of house.

Rear Elevation



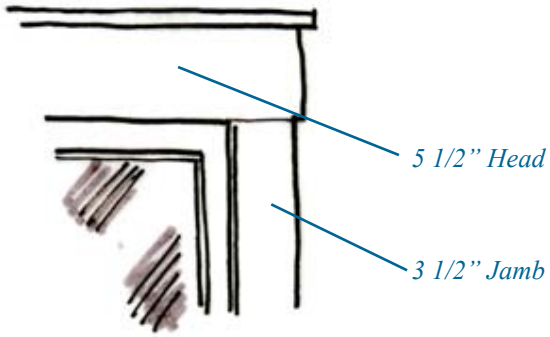
Avoid Blank Walls

Appropriate

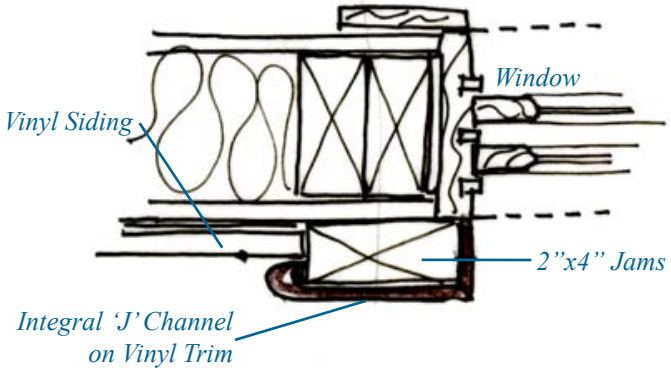
- Care should be taken to avoid blank walls. These can be broken with windows, doors, and other architectural details. A minimum of 20 percent of the wall surface between the ***eaves*** and the foundation should be covered with window and door openings on all elevations. Windows on side and rear elevations allow for natural lighting. Privacy can be maintained with interior blinds or curtains.
- Where an infill house is located on a corner lot with high visibility from the street, special care should be given to developing that side elevation with detailing similar but secondary to the front elevation.

Trim

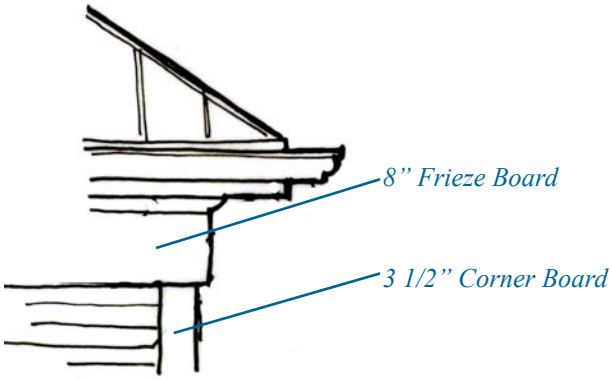
Unless the siding material is a masonry veneer, windows, doors and corners should be trimmed as follows:



- Windows and doors should have a minimum 3 ½ inch jamb and 5 ½ inch head.



- If vinyl siding is used, an 'integral J-channel' should be used for windows and doors so that the siding slips in the groove of the channel behind the trim.



- Vertical ***corner boards*** at all outside and inside corners should be at least 3 ½ inches wide.
- An 8 to 10 inch ***frieze*** board should be located below the ***eaves***.

Building Materials and Colors

To promote a sense of continuity within existing neighborhoods, select construction materials that are similar (at least in appearance and texture) to original materials found within the neighborhood. Colors of materials should be compatible with those of neighboring houses, particularly when choosing brick or stone that has an inherent color. Siding should always be horizontally oriented and painted to complement the colors found within the neighborhood.

Gallery of Examples